ADDRESS

AT THE FUNERAL OF

Mrs. Charlotte Augusta Langdon Sibley,

OF GROTON, MASSACHUSETTS,

JANUARY 25, 1902.

BY HER PASTOR,

REV. JOSHUA YOUNG, D.D.

GROTON:
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The services were held in the First Parish Meetinghouse at Groton; and the interment took place two days later in the family lot at Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge.

ORDER OF SERVICES.

I. PRELUDE ON THE ORGAN.

II. SCRIPTURE READING.

III. HYMN, — "LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT."

IV. ADDRESS.

V. HYMN, — "NEARER, MY GOD, TO THEE."

VI. PRAYER.

VII. BENEDICTION.

"Part in peace, with deep thanksgiving,
Rendering as you homeward tread
Gracious service to the living,
Tranquil memory to the dead."

And may the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, be with you. AMEN.

SCRIPTURE READING.

DEAR FRIENDS: — This the change that comes. This the door that opens and all pass through, out of the unreal into the Real, out of darkness into Light, out of time into Eternity, out of death into Immortality. The sun rises out of life and sets into life; this is the sacred law. It sways to-day and it will sway to-morrow. For all men have one entrance into life and the like going out.

If a man die, shall he live again?

Behold I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

As we have borne the image of the earthy, so also shall we bear the image of the heavenly.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit?

Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there.

If I make my bed in the under-world, behold thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

When I awake I am still with thee.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.

For thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God,

A house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

So also is it written, the first Adam was made a living soul;

The last Adam became a quickening spirit.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption,

And this mortal must put on immortality.

Then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Thanks be to God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, through the Gospel:

Whom, having not seen, we love;

In whom, though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice,

With joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead:

Unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;

And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.
Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.
Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

We had said, "Thou layest men in everlasting sleep;"
But lo! they sleep into everlasting waking.

The memorial of virtue is immortal;
Because it is known with God and with men.
When it is present, mankind take example of it;
And when it is gone they desire it.
It weareth a crown and triumpheth forever,
Having gotten the victory, striving for undefiled rewards.

The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.
Yea, blessed is the memory of the just.
Their bodies are buried in peace,
But their name liveth forevermore.
The people will tell of their wisdom,
And the congregation will show forth their praise.

ADDRESS.

DEAR FRIENDS, — Let us think of death, not as inevitable merely, but as something divine, a process of universal Love, a moment in the universal Life, as something of a piece with the setting sun and the waning moon and the falling leaf, a part of the great order, a necessary link in the universal chain which binds all being to the throne of God. So is death "pure and clean as the dew that comes with the cool night, when the sun has set; and he who in the morning hath chosen the right way may in the evening die without regret."

And, therefore, what so well becomes us who remain and have witnessed the good life, as to thank God for it, and, with faces uplifted, repeat the Christ-bestowed benediction: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

> Her youth was innocent; her riper age
> Marked with some act of goodness every day.

She gave food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothes to the naked. She made her delight in doing good, and forgot no one but herself. She never preferred the great man to him of low degree. She

revered the common brotherhood; she classed mankind —

> according to life's natural ranks,
> Fathers, sons, brothers, friends — not rich, nor wise,
> Nor gifted,

but equal all in the same dependence. She was crowned with the aureole of the "passion of humanity." But let us call her sister of charity, an angel of mercy; that will offend her least, who had no ear for the music of admiration.

My acquaintance with our dear friend, Charlotte Augusta Langdon Cook, subsequently and more widely known as Mrs. John Langdon Sibley, whose mortal part — the last sad, sweet service done which love can perform for its own, and due honor paid to departed worth — we are about to commit to the restful grave, exceeds a period of fifty years.

My first introduction to her was when she was living with her widowed mother and an invalid brother in a small cottage near the border-line between Somerville and Cambridge, on one of the great thoroughfares to the near metropolis. She rose to meet me from beside the couch on which lay her brother, stricken with an incurable disease. The smile of patience on her face, the perfect naturalness of her manner, the tender, loving service she was rendering, the lowliness and yet the dignity of the whole scene stand out vividly before me as a truthful picture of the spirit and chosen way of her entire

life. From beginning to end it was a life of care and service. Retirement and simplicity were her choice; her happy days given to "the quiet tasks of good in the great world," and when — early bereft of a father's protection and later of a mother's presence and companionship — the last great grief came and the deep shadows fell, in the death of her beloved and honored husband, she sought in acts of mercy to others to lose the sense of her own sorrow. Then began, in her dear husband's name, and, as she believed, by his suggestion and guidance, what I may say was the whole business of her life, enthusiastically carried on — "without rest, without haste," namely, to distribute to the children of sorrow and suffering the entire income of the inherited estate; about which estate, its acquisition and its final disposal, a noble and affecting story might be told.

Not by hundreds, but by thousands of dollars shall the value of her yearly charities be reckoned. Far, far more than the widow's mite, she cast into the Lord's treasury — for the poor are His care — her whole living. Where she spent one dollar on herself, she put hundreds into the hand of some worthy recipient: now to help some bright boy, with aspirations beyond his means, obtain an education; now to be a staff of support to some old man, broken with the storms of life; now to assuage the bitterness of dependence where sudden reverse of fortune had come; now to pay for medical attendance and

revive drooping hope in the poor man's heart and home, who cannot afford to be sick or to buy a place for his grave; and again, to defray the funeral expenses when death, more pitiful than life, brought peace and rest.

> So passed her life —
> And far and wide her name shall be named
> With love and reverence.

I have spoken of the benefits she conferred, the acts of kindness she did as "charities," and thereby have I grievously offended against my friend's mind and heart. She did not like to have her deeds of benevolence spoken of as charities, but as obligations, or, again, as pleasures, self-pleasings. How often has she said to me: "I claim no merit, I deserve no praise in all this; I do not even know what self-sacrifice means. I fear God has not allowed me that blessed knowledge. Some find their enjoyment in gaudy apparel and a gold ring, some delight in the strength of horses and a fine equipage, others in keeping up an elegant establishment, in giving 'teas' and receptions, and displaying their rare old china. But I find my enjoyment, my pleasure, my 'sweets' of life in giving relief and comfort to those less fortunate than myself. Oh, no! it is not self-denial. It is my happiness. It is better than going to the play. My calico gown seems to me richer than the gloss and rustle of costliest satin,

when I chance to know that the naked are clothed, the cold warmed, and the hungry fed, a sobbing, suffering child soothed to sleep."

I think I may say I never knew a person more indifferent to mere personal comforts, and yet she had them — all personal comforts and more, for they were thrust upon her, so to speak; otherwise she could not have been, what she was, God's steward — almoner of His bounties.

Of her benefactions more open to the eye of observation, I need not speak in this neighborhood, in this presence. The reminder of them, the beautiful monument thereof, stands before you as you pass out of the door of this meeting-house, which itself also tells of her generosity, in yonder fine organ, which was substantially her gift to the congregation worshipping here. It is more than fitting, I may say in passing, that from all its pipes, " with voices sweet attuned," most melodious strains should sound her praise.

The parcel of land and gifts in ready money of four thousand dollars do not make up the whole sum of her contribution to the cost of our Public Library. She has probably more than doubled the sum named in gifts for the beauty and completeness of its interior furnishing. It was her delight to show her great and untiring interest in whatever could add to its proper and increasing usefulness, as well as to the care and preservation of the build-

ing. She seemed to feel that it was her special privilege to see that it was thoroughly appointed in every respect; almost as if her personal rights were invaded if her counsel and help were not sought in any plan or purpose suggested or entertained for its improvement.

Some of us desired that the Library should take her name, but for reasons that seem less wise now than they did then, the matter was neither urged nor suggested. I may be permitted to say that it was my privilege, at a meeting of the Board of Trustees, to introduce in her absence a resolution, whereby her name should be kept in perpetual remembrance within its walls. As a certain lifting of a veil that may well be drawn aside, I will here recite the resolution alluded to: —

The Board of Trustees of Groton Public Library, in the absence of their esteemed associate, Mrs. Charlotte A. Langdon Sibley, seize the opportunity to cause to be entered on their records, with grateful mention of her large-hearted and wise public spirit, their personal thanks for her recent contribution to the comfort and safety of the building, in the introduction, at her own expense of about one thousand dollars, of a new and improved method of heating it; and, in view of her large and repeated benefactions to secure to the town, *pro nobis et posteritate*, this beautiful House of Learning, be it therefore —

Resolved, with the unquestionable approbation of the public feeling, that the South and West Rooms on the

basement-floor be henceforth called Sibley Hall, to the end that her name and memory may be permanently connected with the great public Benefit on behalf of which her rare enthusiasm, manifested in numberless little acts of thoughtfulness which hide themselves, deserves, hardly less than her original donations of land and money, "a lasting monument and a long remembrance."

I need not add that the resolution was cordially adopted, and a tablet, bearing the inscription SIBLEY HALL, was at once placed on the wall opposite the door of entrance to the rooms.

The cause of education in Groton has received gifts from Mrs. Sibley, not alone in our Public Library. In ways that have attracted no observation, she has been a true and steadfast friend of our Lawrence Academy. I think I am safe in saying, no living alumnus has done for that school so much as she has been doing during the years of her residence among us.

An ounce of prevention, so runs the proverb, is worth a pound of cure. Acting on that principle, what she has done to keep the dwelling-house property in good condition, only a close observer can tell the whole interesting story of. She has, indeed, been "a builder-up of waste places," a repairer of breaches.

Of her benefactions of a certain public nature in other towns, I am not able to speak with the confidence or accuracy of personal knowledge. I do

know, however, that they have not been confined to Groton, or to one necessity.

The hospital, as well as the school, the library, and the church have shared her kindness. And again, as to her private charities, I must repeat that they were everywhere, at home and abroad. They dropped like rain from heaven on the place beneath. She scattered with both hands, and sometimes employed the hands of the pastor of more than one of our local churches.

Only God can count the sad tears that fell when it was known that this friend and helper of the poor was dead, while faces pale looked at one another, and trembling lips said, "What shall we do without her?"

Assuredly, she was a remarkably benevolent woman, a rare example of disinterested, uncalculating kindness and generosity, —

> The sweet presence of a good diffused,
> And in diffusion more intense.

Though she may never know the prayers that go up to heaven for her from sick and wretched creatures, God will hear and answer them, nay, has already bestowed the unspeakable recompense; for the ultimate reward of doing loving things in a loving spirit is the sweet memory of them.

It seems to me very proper, although I know I shall disquiet her spirit, if perchance she may be

listening, to hear what I am about to mention — caring now far less than ever before about this world's distinctions — not improper if I just allude to the circumstance of her descent from a New England ancestry of high character.

Some of the best and purest blood of Boston flowed in her veins; tissues of its best brains she had some of. It is remarkable the number of distinguished persons, especially Unitarian ministers of eminence, to whom she was akin. I will simply say that the Rev. Francis W. P. Greenwood, of King's Chapel, and John Ellerton Lodge, father of Henry Cabot Lodge, senator in Congress, were her cousins, and that to Boston's late silver-tongued orator, and fearless advocate of the rights of man — whom I am not alone in thinking she somewhat resembled in the general outlines of the face, as in fact, she was like him in the spirit of her mind — she was so closely related as this, that Mrs. Sibley's grandmother and Wendell Phillips's mother were sisters.

"But what of it?" she would say, rebukingly. "Ancestral pride is the poorest of all prides, unless one exemplifies in his own life the virtues on which it rests."

And now I have spoken so long, and yet have said nothing respecting Mrs. Sibley's marked intellectual qualities, nothing about her religious nature, her church affiliation, her sect, or her creed. It is easy to supply the omission. I might do so by say-

ing that she needed not "the changing of her sphere" to reach that purest heaven George Eliot so finely describes, and to —

> join the choir invisible,
> Whose music is the gladness of the world.

But I will respect her modesty, her humility, and only repeat, as a pleasant leave-taking of our dead, in faith and hope and love, those suggestive lines of an Eastern sage, in their best known English version: —

> Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
> Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
> And saw, within the moonlight of his room,
> Making it rich and like a lily in bloom,
> An angel writing in a book of gold.
> Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
> And to the presence in the room he said,
> "What writest thou?" The vision raised its head,
> And, with a look made of all sweet accord,
> Answered, "The names of those who love the Lord."
> "And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
> Replied the angel. Adhem spoke more low,
> But cheerly still, and said, "I pray thee, then,
> Write me as one who loves his fellow-men."
> The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
> He came again, with a great wakening light,
> And shewed the names whom love of God had blest,
> And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest!